



## STATE OF WISCONSIN Division of Hearings and Appeals

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In the Matter of

Office of the Inspector General, Petitioner

vs.

██████████, Respondent

DECISION

Case #: FOF - 206901

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Pursuant to petition filed November 18, 2022, under Wis. Admin. Code §HA 3.03, and 7 C.F.R. § 273.16, to review a decision by the Office of the Inspector General to disqualify ██████████ from receiving FoodShare benefits (FS) for a period of one year, a hearing was held on Wednesday, January 11, 2023 at 09:30 AM at , Wisconsin.

The issue for determination is whether the respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV).

There appeared at that time the following persons:

**PARTIES IN INTEREST:**

Petitioner:

Office of the Inspector General  
Department of Health Services - OIG  
PO Box 309  
Madison, WI 53701

Respondent:

██████████  
██████████████████  
██████████  
████████████████████

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:**

Beth Whitaker  
Division of Hearings and Appeals

### FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The respondent (CARES # ██████████) is a resident of NA who received FS benefits in Dane County from July 1, 2015 through September 30, 2022.



2. On August 2, 2022 and August 25, 2021 and May 24, 2019, the agency provided respondent with an Enrollment and Benefits Booklet to inform her of FS program rules.
3. All FS EBT card purchases since October 9, 2021 were made in Georgia and Florida.
4. Respondent report a Georgia address to two employers for hire dates November 10, 2021 and March 20, 2022.
5. Since January 25, 2021, respondent has received medical assistance in the state of Georgia.
6. On January 2, 2021, respondent applied for FS in Georgia and was denied.
7. Respondent reported a Georgia address to the Wisconsin child support agency.
8. On August 1, 2022, respondent renewed FS for an assistance group of one person by telephone and reported a Wisconsin address, stating that she lives with a friend but purchased and prepared food separately.
9. On December 7, 2021, respondent contacted the agency by telephone to inquire why FS benefits were ending. She did not report that she resided out of state.
10. On August 18, 2022, the agency received a report that respondent had resided in Georgia for the last two years.
11. On December 7, 2022, the petitioner prepared an Administrative Disqualification Hearing Notice alleging that failed to disclose residency in the state of Georgia.

### DISCUSSION

An intentional program violation of the FoodShare program occurs when a recipient intentionally does the following:

1. makes a false or misleading statement, or misrepresents, conceals or withholds facts;  
or
2. commits any act that constitutes a violation of the Food Stamp Act, the Food Stamp Program Regulations, or any Wisconsin statute for the purpose of using, presenting, transferring, acquiring, receiving, possessing or trafficking of FoodShare benefits or QUEST cards.

*FoodShare Wisconsin Handbook*, § 3.14.1; *see also* 7 C.F.R. § 273.16(c) and Wis. Stat. §§ 946.92(2).

An intentional program violation can be proven by a court order, a diversion agreement entered into with the local district attorney, a waiver of a right to a hearing, or an administrative disqualification hearing, *FoodShare Wisconsin Handbook*, § 3.14.1. The petitioner can disqualify only the individual found to have committed the intentional violation; it cannot disqualify the entire household. Those disqualified on grounds involving the improper transfer of FS benefits are ineligible to participate in the FoodShare program for one year for the first violation, two years for the second violation, and permanently for the third violation. Although other family members cannot be disqualified, their monthly allotments will be reduced unless they agree to make restitution within 30 days of the date that the FS program mails a written demand letter. 7 C.F.R. § 273.16(b).

In order for the petitioner to establish that an FS recipient has committed an IPV, it has the burden to prove two separate elements by clear and convincing evidence. The recipient must have: 1) committed; and 2) intended to commit a program violation per 7 C.F.R. § 273.16(e)(6). In *Kuehn v. Kuehn*, 11 Wis.2d 15 (1959), the court held that:

Defined in terms of quantity of proof, reasonable certitude or reasonable certainty in ordinary civil cases may be attained by or be based on a mere or fair preponderance of the evidence. Such certainty need not necessarily exclude the probability that the contrary conclusion may be true. In fraud cases it has been stated the preponderance of the evidence should be clear and satisfactory to indicate or sustain a greater degree of certitude. Such degree of certitude has also been defined as being produced by clear, satisfactory, and convincing evidence. Such evidence, however, need not eliminate a reasonable doubt that the alternative or opposite conclusion may be true. ...



*Kuehn*, 11 Wis.2d at 26.

*Wisconsin Jury Instruction – Civil 205* is also instructive. It provides:

Clear, satisfactory and convincing evidence is evidence which when weighed against that opposed to it clearly has more convincing power. It is evidence which satisfies and convinces you that “yes” should be the answer because of its greater weight and clear convincing power. “Reasonable certainty” means that you are persuaded based upon a rational consideration of the evidence. Absolute certainty is not required, but a guess is not enough to meet the burden of proof. This burden of proof is known as the “middle burden.” The evidence required to meet this burden of proof must be more convincing than merely the greater weight of the credible evidence but may be less than beyond a reasonable doubt.

Further, the *McCormick* treatise states that “it has been persuasively suggested that [the clear and convincing evidence standard of proof] could be more simply and intelligibly translated to the jury if they were instructed that they must be persuaded that the truth of the contention is highly probable.” 2 *McCormick on Evidence* § 340 (John W. Strong gen. ed., 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 1992).

Thus, in order to find that an IPV was committed, the trier of fact must derive from the evidence a firm conviction as to the existence of each of the two elements even though there may be a reasonable doubt as to their existence.

In order to prove the second element, i.e., intention, there must be clear and convincing evidence that the FS recipient intended to commit the IPV. The question of intent is generally one to be determined by the trier of fact. *State v. Lossman*, 118 Wis.2d 526 (1984). There is a general rule that a person is presumed to know and intend the probable and natural consequences of his or her own voluntary words or acts. *See, John F. Jelke Co. v. Beck*, 208 Wis. 650 (1932); 31A C.J.S. Evidence §131. Intention is a subjective state of mind to be determined upon all the facts. *Lecus v. American Mut. Ins. Co. of Boston*, 81 Wis.2d 183 (1977). Thus, there must be clear and convincing evidence that the FS recipient knew that the act or omission was a violation of the FS Program but committed the violation anyway.

Respondent did not appear at the hearing. She did contact the Division before the hearing by telephone and left a voice mail containing her telephone number and other information, which is not part of the hearing record and cannot be considered as evidence. Respondent over a period of over one year reported Georgia as her state of residency to obtain Georgia benefits and work in that state. She simultaneously reported to the Wisconsin FS agency that she resided in Wisconsin. There is no plausible explanation for this inconsistency other than intentional fraud. The Enrollment and Benefits Booklet explained rules regarding residency and FS eligibility and there is no evidence in records of her communications with the agency that she ever asked about or reported temporary or intermittent residency in another state. She was required to report the Georgia address where she was living, even if she considered it temporary. The Booklet states in plain language that “If you move out of state, report it to the agency.” There is no record that respondent ever reported moving out of Wisconsin for any period of time.

At the time she contacted the agency on December 7, 2021 regarding verification of Wisconsin employment she stated that she did not begin the job because it had 12 hour overnight shifts. She failed to report that on November 10, 2021 she had provided a Georgia address to an employer for work in that state. Her resume submitted to the employer represented that she worked as a driver in [REDACTED] Georgia from April 2021 to the present. Her last Wisconsin employment reported on the resume was in March 2017. I find that respondent lived in the state of Georgia while received Wisconsin FS and that she intentionally reported Wisconsin residency in order to obtain Wisconsin FS benefits to which she was not entitled. She violated 7 CF§ 273.169(c)(1) and (b) (1) and Wisconsin FS Handbook Sections 2.1, 6.1.1, 3.2.1.2.

Based upon the record before me, I find that the petitioner has established by clear and convincing evidence that the respondent intentionally violated FS program rules, and that this violation was the first such violation



committed by the respondent. Therefore, the petitioner correctly seeks to disqualify the respondent from the FS program for one year.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

1. The respondent violated, and intended to violate, the FS program rule specifying that no person may provide false information to obtain benefits.
2. The violation specified in Conclusion of Law No. 1 is the first such violation committed by the respondent.

**NOW, THEREFORE, it is ORDERED**

That the petitioner's determination is sustained, and that the petitioner may make a finding that the respondent committed a first IPV of the FoodShare program and disqualify the respondent from the program for one year, effective the first month following the date of receipt of this decision.

### **REQUEST FOR A REHEARING ON GROUNDS OF GOOD CAUSE FOR FAILURE TO APPEAR**

In instances where the good cause for failure to appear is based upon a showing of non-receipt of the hearing notice, the respondent has 30 days after the date of the written notice of the hearing decision to claim good cause for failure to appear. See 7 C.F.R. sec. 273.16(e)(4). Such a claim should be made in writing to the Division of Hearings and Appeals, P.O. Box 7875, Madison, WI 53707-7875.

### **APPEAL TO COURT**

You may also appeal this decision to Circuit Court in the county where you live. Appeals must be filed with the Court **and** served either personally or by certified mail on the Secretary of the Department of Health Services, 1 West Wilson Street, Room 651, Madison, WI 53703, **and** on those identified in this decision as "PARTIES IN INTEREST" **no more than 30 days after the date of this decision** or 30 days after a denial of a timely rehearing request (if you request one).

The process for Circuit Court Appeals may be found at Wis. Stat. §§ 227.52 and 227.53. A copy of the statutes may be found online or at your local library or courthouse.

Given under my hand at the City of Madison,  
Wisconsin, this 23rd day of January, 2023



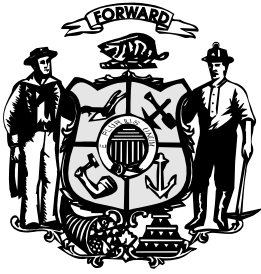
\sBeth Whitaker  
Administrative Law Judge  
Division of Hearings and Appeals

c: Office of the Inspector General - email  
Public Assistance Collection Unit - email  
Division of Health Care Access and Accountability - email  
Jonathan Loehe - email









## **State of Wisconsin\DIVISION OF HEARINGS AND APPEALS**

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The preceding decision was sent to the following parties on January 23, 2023.

Office of the Inspector General  
Public Assistance Collection Unit  
Division of Health Care Access and Accountability  
[REDACTED]